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ABSTRACT

The occupational mobility of U.S. men from generation to generation was measured using data from two large surveys carried out by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1962 and again in 1973. The results are presented in nine tables, with accompanying discussion: (1) Mobility from Fathers (or other Family head) Occupation to Current Occupation...(2) Mobility from Fathers...Occupation to Current Occupation: Black U.S. men in the Experienced Civil Labor Force aged 20 to 64 in 1962 and 1973; (3) Average increase in the socioeconomic status of a mans' occupation associated with a unit increase in the social status of his fathers'...Occupation: U.S. men...by age and race, 1962 and 1973; (4) Effects of Social background on occupational status: U.S. men...by race, 1962 and 1973; (5) Effects of Schooling and Social Background on Occupational Status...by race, 1962 and 1973; (6) Average increase in the Socioeconomic Status of a mans' Occupation associated with an additional year of schooling...by age and race, 1962 and 1973; (7) Average Levels of fathers' and sons educational attainment and Occupational status...by race 1962 and 1973; (8) Sources of Change from 1962 to 1973 in the status of occupations by race... (9) Sources of Racial Differences in the status of Occupations in 1962 and 1973. (JM)

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OCCUPATIONS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES

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Occupations and Social Mobility in the United States

Job-holding is the principal activity by which adults gain their livelihood in the United States. It also leads to a generally recognized social ranking of the population. The connection between occupations and the hierarchies of occupational entry requirements and rewards are perceived accurately by the public. Indeed, any small number of normal adults can rank the social standing of occupations with great reliability. The pervasiveness of job-holding, the stability of occupational requisites and rewards, and the consensus on occupational social standing combine to make occupational incumbency the best single indicator of social standing and occupational change the best single indicator of social mobility. Of course, neither occupational rank nor any other single piece of information accurately represents the degree of wealth, power, or esteem which each of us enjoys. It is easy to think of exceptional cases, like the longshoreman who was a respected and influential social critic, or the wealthy financier whose ideas would be regarded as eccentric foolishness by most people. But the fact that these are exceptions serves to emphasize the point.

In treating occupational mobility as an index of social mobility, we are not mainly interested in month to month or even year to year job changes, but rather in the life-long processes which relate one's occupational position to the circumstances of one's upbringing, schooling, and career beginnings. From two large surveys, carried out by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1962 and again in 1973, it is possible to measure the

occupational mobility of U.S. men from generation to generation. Unfortunately, there are no large and detailed surveys of the occupational mobility of American women, but the available data suggest that most of the findings about men also apply to women who work.

Table 1 shows the mobility of adult U.S. men from the occupations of their fathers (or other family heads) when they were about 16 years old to the occupations they held in March 1962 or March 1973. The five broad categories of occupation in the table can be ranked from high to low in the order given according to the average incomes and educational levels of their incumbents. Two findings are obvious from the table. First, occupational positions tend to persist across generations in the United States, but there is also a great deal of occupational mobility. There has been a general movement out of farming, and elsewhere there is considerable movement up and down the social scale. About two-thirds of the sons of white-collar workers gain white-collar jobs, but so do 30 to 40 percent of the sons of manual workers. At the same time 30 percent or more of the sons of white-collar workers end up in manual or farm occupations. As one can see by comparing the occupational distributions of sons and their fathers in either 1962 or 1973, there is more upward than downward mobility across generations. In 1973, 49 percent were upwardly mobile and 19 percent were downwardly mobile, and in 1962 the corresponding figures were 49 percent upwardly mobile and 17 percent downwardly mobile.

The second main finding in Table 1 is that the results of the 1962 and 1973 surveys are so much alike. There are essentially no differences between the mobility patterns of U.S. men in 1962 and in 1973. In a sense

this is to be expected, for occupational mobility is portrayed here as a life-long process, and most of the cohorts of men in the labor force in 1962 were still working in 1973.

While mobility patterns have been stable in the total population, there have been marked changes in mobility patterns within the black population. Table 2 shows the intergenerational mobility of adult black men in 1962 and in 1973. In 1962 there was little relationship between the occupational position of a black man and that of his father (or other family head). As among whites, there was a massive shift away from farm occupations. In other cases black men born at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy stayed at the bottom, and even those few born into white-collar families were mainly destined to enter lower manual occupations. A comparison between the tables for black men and for all men (mainly whites) in 1962 suggests that black men were subjected to a perverse form of equality of opportunity in the world of work. While the persistence of occupational standing across generations is a form of socially inherited advantage which many persons might wish to reduce, this advantage was enjoyed by the white but not the black population.

By 1973 the mobility table for black men was more like that of all men than it had been a decade earlier. Mobility to white collar occupations was more prevalent among the sons of farmers and manual workers, and the sons of white-collar workers showed a tendency to enter white-collar work which was intermediate between that of black men in 1962 and that of all men in 1962 or 1973. These changes in occupational mobility occurred mainly, but not entirely, among the young black men who entered the labor force between 1962 and 1973.

These mobility trends can be described in more detail using a measure of status persistence. Each of the several hundred occupations identified by the U.S. Bureau of the Census was assigned a status score (ranging from 0 to 96), which is an average of the schooling and income of men in the occupation. Table 3 shows the number of units of status of a man's occupation associated with a one unit change in the social standing of his father's occupation for black and white men at several ages in 1962 and 1973. Among white men a unit of the status of father's occupation was associated with about 0.4 units of current occupational status, regardless of age or the year of the survey. This level of status persistence across generations is far from complete, but it is also fully two-thirds as strong as the association of a man's occupational status with the length of his schooling. Among white men, the association between the statuses of fathers and sons may have decreased slightly from 1962 to 1973, except at ages 55 to 64. The largest decreases occurred at younger ages, so in 1973 there was a direct relationship between age and the persistence of occupational status among white men.

Among blacks there was a marked increase in status persistence at every age. At ages 25 to 34 in 1973 the degree of status persistence was greater among black than among white men, and in 1973 there was an inverse relationship between age and status persistence among black men that contrasts with the opposite pattern among white men. Thus, it appears that black and white men are converging in the degree to which their social standing is associated with that of their fathers.

Father's occupational status is not the only background factor which affects a man's own occupational standing. Table 4 shows the effects of several social background variables on the occupational status of white and black men in 1962 and 1973. These effects are less than the associations in Table 3 because they have been statistically freed of correlation with the other background variables. In the majority population (white and other) the effects of each social background variable were similar in 1962 and in 1973. A unit of father's occupational status was worth about a quarter of a unit of son's occupational status, and a year of father's schooling was worth .87 units of son's occupational status. Each additional sibling in the family of orientation reduced a man's occupational standing by an average of more than a unit, and growing up in a broken family handicapped a man by 2.5 to 3 units of occupational status. Finally, farm background (having a father who farmed) reduced a man's occupational status by 5 or 6 units.

Excepting farm origin, each of the social background variables had a much smaller effect on the occupational standing of black men than on that of majority men in 1962. Notably, neither a highly educated nor a high status father was much of an advantage to a black man, and neither growing up in a large family nor in a broken family imposed as large a handicap as among white men. By 1973 each of the effects (except that of farm background) had increased substantially among black men, and here as in the mobility tables the data suggest growing similarity between the races. It is paradoxical that convergence in processes of achievement between the

black and white populations may come about by the development of more inequality of opportunity within the black population.

It is a matter of controversy whether schools impart general or job-specific skills and attitudes which lead to occupational success or whether they serve merely as certifying agencies in relation to the job market. In any event the length of schooling has an increasingly powerful effect on a man's occupational standing, and schooling plays an important part in bringing about the effects of social background on occupational standing. Thus, our ideas about fairness in the allocation of persons to jobs rest in large part on the relationship between schooling and occupations.

Most of the effects of social background on occupational standing can be explained by the facts that men with advantaged backgrounds stay in school longer, and men with more schooling gain higher status jobs. Table 5 shows the influence of schooling and social background on occupational status. Among white and black men and both in 1962 and 1973 the effects of social background variables on occupational standing fall to small, and in some cases negligible, values once the effects of those variables through schooling have been taken into account. For example, comparing Tables 4 and 5, among majority men in 1973 the length of schooling accounts for 40 percent of the influence of father's occupational status on son's status, for 80 percent of the effect of number of siblings, and for 70 percent of the effect of farm origin. Controlling the length of schooling actually reverses the effects of father's schooling and broken family. It is not an accident that the effect of father's occupational status is least well explained by the length

of schooling, and this suggests that there is an element of job inheritance in the persistence of occupational standing across generations.

Among white men the effect of a year of schooling on the status of occupations is large and increasing: 3.6 units in 1962 and 4.3 units in 1973. The occupational returns to schooling have been much lower among black than among white men, but they are increasing rapidly. A year of school was worth almost three times as much in occupational status to a white man as to a black man in 1962, but it was worth only about one and one-half times as much in 1973. Still, an additional year of schooling was worth far more to a white man in 1962 than to a black in 1973.

In these results the association between schooling and occupational status has been freed of the correlation brought about by the effects of social background on both those variables. As measured here, social background accounts for 10 to 15 percent of the association between schooling and occupational status among black and white men, but other social and psychological variables may account for more of this relationship. Unfortunately, there are no national baseline measurements, let alone time series measurements of the importance of such a broader array of variables.

The changing effects of schooling on occupational standing are worth closer examination. Table 6 shows the influence of a year of schooling on occupational status (controlling social background) among black and white men by age in 1962 and 1973. This table reinforces the impression that occupational returns to schooling are on the increase, and especially among blacks. First, at any given age

the effect of schooling on occupational status was larger in 1962 than in 1973. The absolute increases over the decade were greater among black men than among white men at ages less than 55, giving rise to a sharp cross-sectional age gradient in occupational effects of schooling among black men. Second, the effect of schooling on the status of a man's first civilian job was larger in each successive cohort of black and white men. One striking piece of evidence of increasing occupational returns to schooling among black men is in the comparison of first and current occupations in the 1973 data. Among all but the oldest white men the effect of schooling on the status of the first job was greater than its effect on the status of the current occupation; in the same three cohorts of black men the effect of schooling was greater at the later point in the life-cycle.

The trend of social mobility depends on the interactions of inequalities of opportunity with demographic growth and replacement processes and with the growth and distribution of occupational and educational opportunities throughout society. Table 7 shows averages of occupational status and schooling that indicate changes in the opportunities of black and white men. (The parenthetical entries are measure of variability, the standard deviation; roughly two-thirds of the men are within one standard deviation of the average.) Both in 1962 and in 1973 white men had higher levels of occupational standing and schooling than did black men, but also in both years the fathers of white men had higher occupational status and more years of schooling. Both in 1962 and in 1973 white men had much more

schooling than their fathers (by three or more additional years), and they held higher status jobs (by 11 or more status units). Over the decade there were smaller, but significant increases in occupational status, schooling, and social background among white men.

In 1962 black men had gained little in occupational status relative to their fathers, depsite the fact that they had an average of 2 more years of schooling than their fathers. By 1973 both the occupational standing and schooling of black men had increased dramatically, and so had the occupational and educational standing of black men relative to their fathers. In 1973 the occupations of black men were almost 10 units higher in status than those of their fathers, and they had 3.5 years more of schooling than their fathers. Thus, from the early 1960s to the early 1970s black men gained substantially in social standing, and they began to experience the intergenerational gains in status which had earlier characterized white men.

These changes in social standing among white and black men are related to processes of schooling and status persistence across generations. Table 8 shows the extent to which changes in social background and schooling account for shifts in occupational status. Between 1962 and 1973 black men in the labor force gained an average of 8 occupational status units. Only 13 percent of this change could be explained by the changing social origins of black men who were in the labor force in 1973 relative to black men a decade earlier. More than half of the gain in occupational status could be explained by the higher levels of schooling of black men in 1973, and the

remaining quarter of the change, some two status units, was a gain in the occupational standing of black men with similar social background and schooling.

While the residual gain in status among blacks may seem small, it may be compared with an actual status loss among white men. Changes in schooling alone would nearly account for the 3.3 unit gain in occupational status among white men between 1962 and 1973, and changes in social background would account for more than one-half of the observed status gain. Consequently, white men with the same social background and schooling held lower status jobs in 1973 than in 1962. Paradoxically, this change in the occupational status level associated with a given level of schooling has occurred at the same time that the occupational status gain associated with each additional year of schooling has increased.

The difference between the occupational status of white and black men fell from 21.5 to 16.8 units between 1962 and 1973. Table 9 shows that this modest gain of black men relative to whites was due in its entirety to the increased schooling of blacks relative to whites. Disadvantages of social background cost black men about 8 status units in 1973 as in 1962, and the effect of race beyond that of schooling and social background was about six points in both years. At the same time the differential in schooling between the races narrowed to imply an occupational status differential of only 2.5 units in 1973, compared to nearly 8 units a decade earlier. If recent status gains continue within the black population, the passage of time will narrow the contribution of social background to the racial gap in occupational standing. Processes of demographic replacement cannot

similarly be relied upon to eliminate the large and continuing racial gap in occupational standing among white and black men with the same schooling and social background.

Table 1. Mobility from Father's (or Other Family Head's) Occupation to Current Occupation: U.S. Men in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force Aged 20 to 64 in 1962 and 1973

Year and father's occupation	Son's current occupation						Column percentage
	Upper white collar	Lower white collar	Upper manual	Lower manual	Farm	Total	
1962							
Upper white collar	53.8%	17.6%	12.5%	14.8%	1.3%	100.0%	16.5%
Lower white collar	45.6	20.0	14.4	18.3	1.7	100.0	7.6
Upper manual	28.1	13.4	27.8	29.5	1.2	100.0	19.0
Lower manual	20.3	12.3	21.6	43.8	2.0	100.0	27.5
Farm	15.6	7.0	19.2	36.1	22.2	100.0	29.4
Total	27.8	12.4	20.0	32.1	7.7	100.0	100.0
1973							
Upper white collar	52.0	16.0	13.8	17.1	1.1	100.0	18.2
Lower white collar	42.3	19.7	15.3	21.9	0.8	100.0	9.0
Upper manual	29.4	13.0	27.4	29.0	1.1	100.0	20.5
Lower manual	22.5	12.0	23.7	40.8	1.0	100.0	29.7
Farm	17.5	7.8	22.7	37.2	14.8	100.0	22.6
Total	29.9	12.7	21.7	31.5	4.1	100.0	100.0

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Occupation groups are upper white collar: professional and kindred workers and managers, officials and proprietors, except farm; lower white collar: sales, clerical and kindred workers; upper manual: craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers; lower manual: operatives and kindred workers, service workers, and laborers, except farm; farm: farmers and farm managers, farm laborers and foremen.

Table 2. Mobility from Father's (or Other Family Head's) Occupation to Current Occupation: Black U.S. Men in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force Aged 20 to 64 in 1962 and 1973

Year and father's occupation	Son's current occupation: Upper white collar	Lower white collar	Upper manual	Lower manual	Farm	Total	Column percentage
1962							
Upper white collar	10.4%	10.3%	19.7%	59.6%	0.0%	100.0%	4.5%
Lower white collar	14.4	13.5	0.0	72.1	0.0	100.0	1.9
Upper manual	8.5	9.7	10.4	67.9	3.6	100.0	9.0
Lower manual	7.6	8.0	10.8	71.4	2.3	100.0	37.2
Farm	3.2	3.3	7.0	66.7	19.8	100.0	47.4
Total	5.9	6.1	9.1	68.3	10.6	100.0	100.0
1973							
Upper white collar	33.2	21.8	10.1	34.8	0.0	100.0	5.0
Lower white collar	23.8	17.2	12.3	45.8	0.9	100.0	3.5
Upper manual	15.2	14.7	15.0	54.9	0.2	100.0	10.2
Lower manual	12.4	11.2	13.9	61.4	1.1	100.0	46.1
Farm	5.6	6.2	16.8	62.9	8.5	100.0	35.1
Total	11.8	10.6	14.8	59.4	3.6	100.0	100.0

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Occupation groups are upper white collar: professional and kindred workers and managers, officials and proprietors, except farm; lower white collar: sales, clerical and kindred workers; upper manual: craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers; lower manual: operatives and kindred workers, service workers, and laborers, except farm; farm: farmers and farm managers, farm laborers and foremen.

Table 3. Average Increase in the Socioeconomic Status of A Man's Occupation Associated with a Unit Increase in the Social Status of his Father's (or Other Family Head's) Occupation: U.S. Men in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force by Age and Race, 1962 and 1973

Race and age	1962	1973
Black, 25 to 64	.175	.383
25 to 34	.180	.429
35 to 44	.252	.326
45 to 54	.103	.303
55 to 64	.168	.244
White and other, 25 to 64	.461	.410
25 to 34	.450	.373
35 to 44	.469	.419
45 to 54	.467	.434
55 to 64	.445	.458

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Detailed 1960-basis Census occupations are scaled in Duncan's socioeconomic index for occupations.

Table 4. Effects of Social Background on Occupational Status: U.S. Men Aged 25 to 64 in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force by Race, 1962 and 1973

Social background variable	1962		1973	
	Black	White and other	Black	White and other
Father's occupational status	.067	.286	.200	.249
Father's years of schooling	.563	.873	1.062	.866
Number of siblings	-.221	-1.097	-.513	-1.266
Farm origin	-4.978	-5.949	-5.009	-4.789
Broken family	-.576	-3.245	-1.946	-2.472

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Entries are regression coefficients, controlling all variables listed.

Table 5. Effects of Schooling and Social Background on Occupational Status: U.S. Men Aged 25 to 64 in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force by Race, 1962 and 1973

Variable	1962		1973	
	Black	White and other	Black	White and other
Respondent's years of schooling	1.272	3.597	2.666	4.258
Father's occupational status	.046	.167	.164	.153
Father's years of schooling	.196	.072	.293	-.112
Number of siblings	-.112	-.242	-.322	-.284
Farm origin	-1.424	-3.000	-.286	-1.399
Broken family	.418	.576	-.382	.848

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Entries are regression coefficients, controlling all variables listed.

Table 6. Average Increase in the Socioeconomic Status of a Man's Occupation Associated with an Additional Year of Schooling: U.S. Men in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force by Age and Race, 1962 and 1973

Race and age	1962 survey	1973 survey	
	Current occupation	Current occupation	First occupation
Black, 25 to 64	1.272	2.666	2.248
25 to 64	1.830	3.827	3.046
35 to 44	1.153	3.487	3.008
45 to 54	1.271	2.406	1.862
55 to 64	1.418	1.506	1.600
White and other, 25 to 64	3.597	4.258	4.517
25 to 34	4.435	4.897	5.257
35 to 44	3.978	4.430	4.816
45 to 54	3.494	4.183	4.445
55 to 64	2.998	3.601	3.445

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Occupations are scaled in Duncan's socioeconomic index for occupations. Entries are coefficients in regression equations controlling father's occupational status and years of schooling, farm origin, intact family, and number of siblings.

Table 7. Average Levels of Father's and Son's Educational Attainment and Occupational Status: U.S. Men Aged 25 to 64 in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force by Race, 1962 and 1973

Variable	1962		1973	
	Black	White and other	Black	White and other
Father's occupational status	16.2 (12.9)	28.1 (21.3)	16.0 (13.7)	30.2 (22.6)
Son's occupational status	17.8 (15.2)	39.2 (24.4)	25.8 (20.4)	42.6 (25.2)
Father's years of schooling	5.95 (3.82)	7.99 (3.90)	6.54 (3.86)	8.59 (4.01)
Son's years of schooling	7.94 (4.02)	10.96 (3.43)	10.02 (3.54)	12.01 (3.16)

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Occupations are scaled in Duncan's socioeconomic index. Main entries are arithmetic means, and parenthetic entries are standard deviations. In some cases the "father's" education or occupation is that of a family head other than the father.

Table 8. Sources of Change from 1962 to 1973 in the Status of Occupations by Race: U.S. Men Aged 25 to 64 in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force

Source of change	Black		White and other	
	Change	Percent	Change	Percent
Social background	1.06	13	1.86	56
Education	4.68	59	3.07	92
Other	2.25	28	-1.60	-48
Total change	7.99	100	3.33	100

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Social background includes father's occupational status and years of schooling, farm origin, number of siblings, and broken family. Components of change are based on a regression-standardization procedure in which the 1973 regression equations for each race are applied to differences between 1962 and 1973 in average social background and education.

Table 9. Sources of Racial Differences in the Status of Occupations in 1962 and 1973: U.S. Men Aged 25 to 64 in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force

Source of difference	1962		1973	
	Difference	Percent	Difference	Percent
Social background	8.04	37	8.37	50
Education	7.90	37	2.55	15
Other	5.54	26	5.90	35
Total difference	21.48	100	16.82	100

Note: Data are from March 1962 and March 1973 Current Population Surveys and Occupational Changes in a Generation Surveys. Social background includes father's occupational status and years of schooling, farm origin, number of siblings, and broken family. Components of change are based on a regression-standardization procedure in which the white regression equations in 1962 or 1973 are applied to differences between the races in average social background and education.